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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [TH](#)

SUBJECT: PALACE APPROVES OCTOBER 15 THAI ELECTION

REF: A. BANGKOK 004373 (SHUFFFLING DECKS IN A
HIGH-STAKES GAME)

[B](#). BANGKOK 004277 (JOCKEYING INTENSIFIES)

[C](#). BANGKOK 004041 (STEAK WITH THAKSIN)

Classified By: CDA ALEX A. ARVIZU. REASON 1.4 (B,D)

[1](#). (C) In a royal surprise, the King (currently recovering from surgery) has formally approved the October 15 general election, setting the stage for a possible breakthrough in one aspect of the political crisis. While the palace's assent to a new vote was not in itself unexpected, most observers believed that it would not come until next month, and would be granted only if the controversial Election Commission (EC) was replaced. Indeed Thaksin told the Ambassador on July 7 (ref C) that he expected the EC to resign, but also believed that the date of the next vote would slip.

[2](#). (C) Other members of the political elite agreed on the latter point. The ongoing court cases against both Thaksin's Thai Rak Thai (TRT) and the opposition Democrat parties--as well as wrangling over the EC--would delay a new election. Even before today's announcement, however, conventional wisdom on this issue had begun to shift. In a possible nod to the untenability of the current situation (a PM without a parliament for five months, rising investor wariness, etc.) various tentacles of TRT have publicly stated this week that the election really has to happen on October 15. Some observers now believe that there will be no resolution to many of the pending court cases (and potential dissolution of the two main parties) until after the election. It's not clear yet why the palace decided today to release a decree that won't be valid for another month. The palace may be trying to counter coup fears that have increased with the rising tension between the military leadership and the government (refs A,B.) The King seems to be signaling that the crisis must be resolved at the ballot box and not through other means.

[3](#). (C) We do not know the details of the deal that facilitated this development (or if there even was one), but the EC remains the key stumbling block to a new vote. Adding weight to rumors of a deal involving the EC, the King called for a real, fair and clean election in a rare statement following the royal order. If the EC members do resign, it will take some time (and involve some creative legal maneuvers) to establish a new EC and prepare for the vote. But it will be one major and welcome step forward.
ARVIZU